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SURGERY HOURS AND SERVICES

CONSULTATIONS can be arranged by phoning. 5655 1355

Monday to Friday 9.00am–5.30pm

Saturday 9.00am–12.00noon
(phone lines open at 8.30am)

The practice prefers to see patients by appointment in order to minimise people's waiting time.

Home visits can be arranged when necessary. If you need a home visit, please contact the surgery as soon as possible after 8.30am.

For After hours emergency medical attention – at night, weekends or public holidays please call 03 56542753 where a nurse will triage your needs and contact the doctor on call.

YOUR DOCTOR

NOVEMBER 2025

HEALTH FROM THE SEA

MANAGING YOUR ALLERGIES

RETHINKING CHRONIC PAIN

MEN'S MENTAL WELLBEING

Compliments of your GP

Sugar and inflammation: what you need to know

Most of us know that too many sweet treats can lead to low energy and weight gain. But research also shows that eating too much added sugar may contribute to chronic inflammation, a silent process in the body linked to a range of health conditions.

What does sugar have to do with inflammation?

Inflammation is your body's way of protecting itself – it helps fight infections and heal injuries. This short-term (acute) response is normal and healthy. But when inflammation lingers without an obvious cause, it can start to do more harm than good. This is known as chronic inflammation, which is linked to long-term health issues.

High sugar intake can cause frequent blood sugar spikes, which may stress the body and increase chronic inflammation.

Over time, eating too much added sugar can increase the risk of insulin resistance. It can also contribute to belly fat or fatty liver, both of which release inflammatory chemicals into the body. These issues may increase the risk of serious conditions such as:

- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Obesity
- Joint problems (like worsening arthritis symptoms)
- Certain cancers

Expanding on belly fat

Excess fat around the abdomen (also called visceral fat) can do more than change your waistline. It's active tissue that releases chemicals which increase inflammation - making it a key factor in long-term health risks. That's why managing your sugar intake can help reduce both belly fat and chronic inflammation.

Tips to reduce sugar - and support your health

Reducing added sugar may help lower inflammation over time. It's not always easy, but you don't need to give up all sweet food. Natural sugars in fruit, dairy, and whole grains aren't the issue - it's the added sugars in processed foods that raise concern.

Try these simple tips:

- **Check food labels** for added sugars (like glucose, fructose, corn syrup, or cane sugar).
- **Choose water or unsweetened drinks** over sugary soft drinks, energy drinks, or alcohol.
- **Go for whole foods** more often - like wholegrain bread, plain yogurt, fresh fruit, and home-cooked meals.
- **Be mindful of "healthy" foods** - many cereals, protein bars, sauces, and low-fat yogurts can contain surprising amounts of sugar.
- **Eat balanced meals** and protein-rich snacks to stabilise blood sugar and reduce cravings.
- **Manage stress and get enough sleep**, as these can influence sugar cravings.
- **Stay hydrated** - sometimes thirst can feel like a sweet craving.
- **Remove temptation** by keeping high-sugar foods out of easy reach and stocking up on healthier alternatives.
- **Swap** out one sugary food a day and gradually reduce others over time.

Even small changes can make a big difference - supporting your energy, waistline, and long-term health. If you're not sure where to start, speak with your GP.

Health tip — watch your waistline

Waist measurement is a simple way to see if you're carrying extra fat around your middle, as this can signal a higher risk for some long-term health issues. If you're concerned, talk to your doctor - they can help you know what's right for you.

Our newsletter is free - please take a copy with you

Breathe easier this season: smart tips for managing hay fever

As spring flowers, grasses and weeds bloom, many of us brace for hay fever. Fortunately, simple strategies can significantly ease symptoms and help you enjoy the season. Here's how to manage allergies effectively.

Know the enemy: what you're facing

Hay fever (seasonal allergic rhinitis) happens when your immune system reacts to allergens such as pollens released by plants. These commonly trigger sneezing, itchy or watery eyes, and a blocked or runny nose. Grass pollens are the main cause during spring and summer.

Mould spores from fungi in soil or leaf litter, dust mites and animal dander may also cause allergic rhinitis year-round.

People with asthma may notice that their symptoms worsen when pollen counts are high, making management especially important.

Minimise exposure where you can

On high-pollen days you can reduce your exposure to pollen with some simple precautions:

- Keep windows and doors closed and use air conditioning with filters. Use preventer treatments if recommended.
- Postpone outdoor activities like gardening and mowing until pollen counts are lower.
- Stay indoors before, during, and after thunderstorms, or on windy days.
- Shower and change clothes after being outside.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Early and regular treatment

Starting treatment early gives the best results. This often includes nasal sprays or rinses, and measures to reduce inflammation or block allergic reactions.

Hay fever isn't just annoying–if poorly controlled, it can disrupt sleep, cause fatigue and headaches, raise the risk of sinus or ear infections, or worsen asthma. Tracking your symptoms–when, where, and how severe–can help you manage them more effectively.

If self-care isn't enough, see your GP to review your plan, identify triggers, and discuss options such as allergy testing or referral to a specialist.

With good self-management and regular check-ups, many people get through hay fever season with far less disruption.

Did you know?

'Hay fever' isn't actually from hay, and it doesn't give you a fever.

Test your health knowledge

See if you can fill in the blanks in the following sentences

1. Physical symptoms like headaches, appetite changes, or ongoing fatigue can also signal _____ issues.
2. Early detection is important because many mental health conditions are _____ if addressed in time.
3. Acute pain acts as a _____ system, telling us to rest or protect an injured area.
4. Chronic pain can continue long after the body has _____ itself.
5. Hay fever occurs when the immune system reacts to allergens such as _____ released by plants.
6. People with _____ may notice hay fever symptoms worsen when pollen counts are high.
7. Seaweed is one of the richest natural sources of _____, essential for thyroid health.
8. Some types of seaweed, like wakame, contain more _____ per gram than milk, helping support bone health.
9. Inflammation helps fight infections and heal injuries, but when it lingers without a cause it becomes _____ inflammation.
10. High _____ intake can cause frequent blood sugar spikes, increasing chronic inflammation.

Hint: Clues can be found in the articles in this newsletter.

New hope for chronic pain: retraining the brain

Living with ongoing pain can be exhausting. For many people, pain doesn't just hurt – it affects mood, sleep, relationships, and quality of life. It can be especially frustrating if the original injury has healed, yet the pain continues. Research is shedding light on why this happens – and offering new ways to help.

Why we feel pain

Pain isn't always bad. In the short term, it's a natural warning system that tells us to rest, protect an injured area, or avoid further harm. Normally, pain fades as the body heals. But sometimes the nervous system stays on high alert, continuing to send pain signals after tissues have repaired. That's when it becomes challenging.

The brain's role in pain

Our brains don't just register pain – they also shape how strongly we feel it. Long-lasting pain can make the nervous system more sensitive, so movements or sensations that used to feel safe may still trigger discomfort even when there's no new injury. This doesn't mean the pain isn't real or "just in your head"– it shows how powerful the brain's role can be.

Retraining the brain

Traditional approaches like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) help people cope with pain. Newer therapies go further, aiming to "turn down the volume" of pain signals. These methods work by desensitising pain signals or helping the brain interpret them as less threatening.

With professional guidance, people gently practice movements that might usually cause discomfort, while learning to see them as safe rather than harmful. Understanding that pain does not always mean damage can also reduce fear, which can help the nervous system respond more calmly to pain.

Simple practices such as meditation, slow breathing, or stress-management techniques can also support this process. Managing stress and emotions is important, as feelings like fear and frustration can make pain worse.

Looking ahead

Research into brain-based pain therapies is ongoing, but results so far are encouraging. They remind us that while chronic pain is complex, it is not something we have to "put up with". By combining medical care with brain-retraining strategies, many people are finding new hope and better quality of life.

Men and mental health: let's talk about it

Your mental health matters – let's look after it together.

We often focus on keeping physically healthy – eating well, staying active, and getting regular check-ups. But mental health is just as important and can often be overlooked.

What are the signs something's not right?

You might notice changes such as:

- anger or irritability
- feeling flat, empty, or unmotivated
- sleeping too much or too little
- drinking more alcohol
- withdrawing from family, friends, or activities you used to enjoy
- trouble concentrating.

Physical symptoms such as headaches, or ongoing fatigue can also signal mental health issues. These are easy to dismiss, but they shouldn't be ignored.

Why many men stay silent

As GPs, we understand that talking about feelings can be difficult. Many men try to push through, stay strong, or even wonder if what they're experiencing is normal. This can mean problems go unnoticed.

There is help – and it works

Around one in eight Australian men will experience depression, and one in five will experience anxiety during their lifetime. However, many don't speak up or seek help early enough.

That's where regular health checks are vital. Just as we check your blood pressure or cholesterol, we can also discuss your stress levels, mood, or anything else you've noticed. Many mental health conditions are treatable, and the earlier we spot a concern, the sooner we can help.

Support may include lifestyle changes, counselling, medication, or a combination that suits your needs. You're not expected to figure it all out alone – we're here to work through it with you.

Make your mental health a priority

Sometimes, just talking to someone you trust can make all the difference. Opening up isn't a weakness – it can be the start of feeling better.

If you experience any of these signs, or just feel that something's not right, reach out for help – we're here to support you every step of the way.

Movember runs throughout November to raise awareness about men's health. It encourages open conversations and early action to support better wellbeing.

NO-MAT HEALTHY SUSHI ROLLS

Dried nori adds a health boost, and a tasty savoury, umami flavour to your meals. This simple method makes sushi rolls in minutes - no special sushi mat needed!

INGREDIENTS

- 1–2 nori sheets
- ½ cup cooked sticky rice
- Veggies: avocado, cucumber, carrot, capsicum (thin strips)
- Optional protein: cooked tuna, salmon or chicken pieces
- Optional sesame seeds

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp lemon or lime juice
- ½ tsp grated ginger (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place nori sheet shiny side down on a clean surface or baking paper.
2. Spread rice in a thin layer, leaving a 2 cm gap at the top.
3. Place veggies and optional protein across the middle. Sprinkle sesame seeds if desired.
4. Fold edge over the filling and keep rolling until sealed; use a little water on the top edge if needed.
5. Slice into bite-sized pieces. Serve with soy sauce or the citrus soy dip.

Tip: Roll gently to avoid tearing the nori.

Seaweed: A nutrient-rich treasure from the sea

Ocean algae have been a staple in many cultures for centuries, and offer an impressive range of nutrients and health benefits. In this article, we focus on dried seaweed as it's the form that's easiest to find and eat.

An iodine source (but watch your intake!)

Seaweed is one of the richest natural sources of iodine – often far more than dairy or eggs. Iodine is essential for thyroid health, helping regulate metabolism and energy levels. However, too much iodine can disrupt thyroid function, potentially leading to either an overactive or underactive thyroid.

More calcium than milk?

Some types of seaweed, like wakame, contain more calcium per gram than milk. This makes it a great option for supporting bone health, especially if you're looking for plant-based calcium sources. Plus, it's rich in magnesium, which helps your body use calcium more effectively.

Antioxidants for cell protection

Seaweed is rich in antioxidants that help protect cells from free radical damage, which is linked to chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Some varieties such as nori and kelp also have anti-inflammatory properties.

Inflammation is your body's natural response to injury or infection, but ongoing inflammation can contribute to illness over time. Including foods with anti-inflammatory compounds, like seaweed, may help support your overall wellbeing.

An ally for weight management

Seaweed contains a type of fibre called alginate, which may help slow digestion and keep you feeling full for longer. Some studies suggest that compounds in seaweed could reduce fat absorption, making it potentially helpful for managing weight.

Plant-based source of Omega-3

We usually associate omega-3 fatty acids with fish, but seaweed can also provide small amounts of these essential fats. Omega-3s support brain function, heart health, and help reduce inflammation. Different types of seaweed provide varying amounts – for instance, nori used in sushi contains only a little, while other varieties may offer more omega-3s.

A few things to keep in mind

Seaweed absorbs minerals from the ocean, so some may contain heavy metals like arsenic or lead. Choose products from clean waters and trusted brands to lower this risk. Start with small amounts – its high fibre content can be too much for some at first. If you have thyroid issues, ask your doctor if seaweed is right for you.

Whether sprinkled over a meal, blended into a smoothie, added to soup, or enjoyed as a snack – dried seaweed is a simple way to add extra nutrition to your diet. Who knew this ocean treasure had so much to offer?

Questions to ask at your doctor's visit

Asking questions helps you get the care you need. To make the most of your visit, jot down anything you'd like to know about in the space below. Take this list with you so it's easy to remember what you wanted to ask.

DOCTOR'S NAME	DATE	TIME

1.
2.
3.
NOTES:

Puzzle answers:

1. Mental health
2. Treatable
3. Warning
4. Repaired
5. Pollens
6. Asthma
7. Iodine
8. Calcium
9. Chronic
10. Sugar

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ABOUT LUNG CANCER SCREENING

Eligible Australians aged 50 to 70 can screen for signs of lung cancer every two years through the new National Lung Cancer Screening Program (NLCSP).

The NLCSP uses low-dose computed tomography (CT) scans to look for lung cancer in eligible people without any symptoms who are at a higher risk of lung cancer due to their age and smoking history.

Eligibility checks and referrals for low-dose CT scans will be overseen by your doctor, your' smoking history and age.

The National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) will support delivery of the NLCSP by maintaining a national database of lung cancer screening records. The NCSR will also generate screening reminders and notify people and healthcare providers of their results following a low-dose CT scan.

Two new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items have been created to provide free low-dose CT scans under the NLCSP. These will be mandatory bulk billing items and will have mandatory reporting requirements.

Program eligibility

Eligible people invited to participate in the NLCSP must:

- be aged 50 to 70, and
- have no signs or symptoms suggestive of lung cancer (e.g. persistent cough, coughing up blood, shortness of breath), and
- smoke cigarettes or have quit within the last 10 years, and
- have a smoking history of at least 30 pack years (e.g. a pack a day for 30 years or 2 packs a day for 15 years).

When determining program eligibility, you will need to work with your doctor to estimate the average number of cigarettes smoked per day and over how many years. For example: if you smoked 20 cigarettes per day (one pack) for 30 years, this is the equivalent of 30 pack years.

You do not have to quit smoking to participate in the NLCSP.

More information

For more information for healthcare providers about the NLCSP, please visit the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's dedicated website.

This website also houses a toolkit for healthcare providers with information, education and resources to support you to prepare for the NLCSP.